

BISMUTH

THE only preparation of this metal which has been introduced into practice is the oxid, or, as some of the chemists state it to be, the sub-nitrate.

Bismuthi Sub-Nitras. To Dr. Odier of Geneva we are indebted for this acquisition to the materia medica. It appears, that so early as the year 1786, he published a paper on the subject, in which the attention of physicians was solicited to the powers of the medicine, in several of the affections of the stomach. But prejudices arising against it, which have since been proved to be unfounded, prevented its gaining ground, as a remedy, on the continent of Europe. The first notice of its being employed in Britain, is in the Medical and Physical Journal, for July, 1799. It is mentioned by the editors of that work as a medicine either neglected or forgotten, "though," say they, "it is stated to be a powerful remedy in spasmodic pain of the stomach and bowels, particularly if it arises from organic debility, or a relaxed and emaciated constitution." To Dr. Marcet, a very distinguished practitioner in London, the credit of reviving this article, and perhaps of establishing its reputation, is due. In a paper which he had published relative to its use, he says, "I have had frequent opportunities, in Guy's Hospital, of trying the oxid of bismuth, in spasmodic affections of the stomach, and those trials have fully confirmed the opinion which I formerly gave of its great utility." Confidence in the medicine being thus inspired, it came soon into general use, and the most ample evidence was collected in confirmation of the preceding statement of its efficacy.

Nor perhaps has less been done with it in the United States. It is very extensively employed, by the most eminent physicians of New York, who concur in reporting very favourably of its powers, in all the affections connected with dyspepsia, as gastrodynia, cardialgia, pyrosis, and in the depraved state of the stomach incident to pregnancy. In Boston, it is also a remedy much trusted. The highly respectable editors of the New England Medical Journal, thus express their opinion of its utility.

"The action of this substance on the stomach is that of a mild and effectual tonic, and, from our own experience of its virtues, we do not

hesitate to affirm, with Odier, Marcet, Bardsley, and Moore, that in pyrosis, cardialgia, and more particularly gastrodynia, it operates more speedily, and with more certainty, than any other article of the *materia medica*."

I have tried this medicine in several of the gastric affections, to which it is considered most applicable, and though sometimes with success, I confess my expectations have often been disappointed. Yet my confidence in it has not, on this account, ceased. No cases are more difficult to cure than those I have noticed, and none in which the powers of medicine are so often baffled and counteracted, by the neglect of the regulations as to diet and other circumstances, the strict observance of which is indispensably required.

This is a safe and active medicine, and therefore has strong claims to our attention, independently of the weight of evidence collected in its favour. . . .

N. Chapman: *Elements of Therapeutics and Materia Medica*. Fifth edition. Philadelphia, Carey, Lea, and Carey, 1827, vol. 2, pp. 431-433.